

In the Claims:

1-18 (cancelled)

19. (Currently Amended)      An ATM network system comprising:

a network device; and

a plurality of user devices,

wherein said network device receives from one of said plurality of user devices a first specific ATM cell which has a specific VPI value and a specific VCI value in its header and is loaded in an information field with a device ID for identifying said one of said plurality of user devices and transmits, to said one of said plurality of user devices, a second specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header and is loaded with the device ID and a proper VPI value on an information field, and

said one of said plurality of user devices acquires the device ID from the network device on first connection, transmits the first specific ATM cell after the first connection with said network device, receives the second specific ATM cell, and holds the proper VPI value as its own VPI value when the device ID loaded in the second specific ATM cell is ~~equal to~~ confirmed to be the acquired device ID.

20. (Previously Presented)      The ATM network system according to Claim 19, wherein:

said user device includes a confirmation means for transmitting a third specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header, after holding its own VPI value, and for receiving a fourth specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header; and

said network device includes a confirmation response means for transmitting a fourth specific ATM cell in response to the third specific ATM cell.

21. (Previously Presented) The ATM network system according to Claim 20, wherein:

said one of said plurality of user devices includes an initialization means for initializing its own VPI value, wherein said initialization means transmits a fifth specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header and is loaded with an initializing request on an information field, and receives a sixth specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header; and

said network device includes a transmission means for transmitting the sixth specific ATM cell in response to said fifth specific ATM cell.

22. (Currently Amended) The ATM network system according to Claim 21, wherein:

said one of said plurality of user devices includes an initialization confirmation means for transmitting a seventh specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header and is loaded with said device ID for identifying said one of said plurality of user devices on an information field, after initializing its own VPI value, and for receiving an eighth specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header and is loaded with the device ID and the proper VPI value on an information field, and holds the proper VPI value as its own VCI value when the device ID loaded in the eighth specific ATM cell is confirmed to be equal to the acquired device ID; and

said network device includes an initialization confirmation response means for transmitting the eighth specific ATM cell in response to the seventh specific ATM cell.

23. (Previously Presented) The ATM network system according to Claim 21, wherein:

a number of said plurality of user devices connected with a channel of said network device is limited within a prescribed number; and

the proper VPI value is different from each other within a channel of said network device which transmits the first specific ATM cell.

24. (Previously Presented) The ATM network system according to Claim 21, wherein said transmission means transmits in response to the fifth specific ATM cell the sixth specific ATM cell towards all of said plurality of user devices which are connected with a channel of said network device.

25. (Previously Presented) The ATM network system according to Claim 24, further comprising:

a plurality of network terminals which are connected with the network device by channels.

26. (Previously Presented) The ATM network system according to Claim 19, wherein said network device has a VPI value allocation memory table which includes a plurality of communication VPI values for every channel of said network device, and flags for indicating whether the proper VPI value is allocated or not.

27. (Currently Amended) A VPI value allocation method for an ATM network system including a network device and a plurality of user devices, which comprises the steps of:

an acquiring step for acquiring a device ID from said network device by one of said plurality of user devices on first connection to said network device;

a first transmission step for transmitting, from said one of said plurality of user devices to said network device, a first specific ATM cell which has a specific VPI value and a specific VCI value in its header and is loaded with the device ID for identifying said one of said plurality of user devices on an information field;

a second transmission step for transmitting, to said one of said plurality of user devices, in response to the first specific ATM cell, a second specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header and is loaded with the device ID and a proper VPI value on an information field; and

a holding step for holding the proper VPI value as its own VPI value in said one of said plurality of user devices when the device ID loaded in the second specific ATM cell is confirmed to be equal to the acquired device ID, after receiving the second specific ATM cell.

28. (Previously Presented) The VPI value allocation method for an ATM network system including a network device and a plurality of user devices according to Claim 27, which further comprises the steps of:

a third transmission step for transmitting a third specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header for notifying an arrival of said proper VPI value, from said one of said plurality of user devices to said network device;

a fourth transmission step for transmitting in response to the third specific ATM cell a fourth specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header; and

a receiving step for receiving the fourth specific ATM cell at said one of said plurality of user devices.

29. (Previously Presented) The VPI value allocation method for an ATM network system including a network device and a plurality of user devices according to Claim 28, which further comprises said steps of:

a fifth transmission step for transmitting, from said one of said plurality of user devices to said network device, a fifth specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header and is loaded with an initializing request on an information field for requesting an initialization of the proper VPI value;

a sixth transmission step for transmitting from said network device to said one of said plurality of user devices a sixth specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header for permitting the request, in response to the fifth specific ATM cell; and

an initializing step for initializing the proper VPI value held by said one of said plurality of user devices.

30. (Previously Presented) The VPI value allocation method for an ATM network system including a network device and a plurality of user devices according to Claim 29, which further comprises the steps of:

a seventh transmission step for transmitting a seven specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header and is loaded with the device ID for identifying said one of said plurality of user devices on an information field for notifying an execution of said initialization, from said one of said plurality of user devices towards said network device, after said initializing step;

an eighth transmission step for transmitting in response to the seventh specific ATM cell an eighth specific ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header and is loaded with the device ID and the proper VPI value on an information field from said network device to said user device; and

a receiving step for receiving the eighth specific ATM cell at said user device.

31. (Previously Presented) The VPI value allocation method for an ATM network system including a network device and a plurality of user devices according to Claim 27, wherein:

a number of said one of said plurality of user devices connected with a channel of said network device is limited within a prescribed number; and

the proper VPI value is different from each other within a channel of said network device.

32. (Previously Presented) The VPI value allocation method for an ATM network system including a network device and a plurality of user devices according to Claim 29, wherein said sixth transmission step said network device transmits in response to the fifth specific ATM cell the sixth specific ATM cell towards all of said user devices which are connected with a channel of said network device.

33. (Previously Presented) The VPI value allocation method for an ATM network system including a network device and a plurality of user devices according to Claim 32, wherein a plurality of network terminals are connected with the network device by a channel.

34. (Previously Presented) The VPI value allocation method for an ATM network system including a network device and a plurality of user devices according to Claim 27, wherein said network device has a VPI value allocation memory table which includes a plurality of communication VPI values for every channel of said network device, and flags for indicating whether the proper VPI value is allocated or not.

35. (Currently Amended)     AThe VPI value allocation method for an ATM network system including a network device and a plurality of user devices, which comprises the steps of:

a connection step for connecting said network device and one of said plurality of user devices;

acquiring step for acquiring a device ID on first connection from one of said plurality of user devices to said network device; and

a sharing step for holding said VPI value in common by communication between said network device and said one of said plurality of user devices using a ATM cell which has a specific VPI value and a specific VCI value in its header and is loaded with the device ID for identifying said user one of said plurality of user devices on an information field.

36. (Previously Presented)     The VPI value allocation method for an ATM network system including a network device and a plurality of user devices according to Claim 35, which further comprises an initializing step for initializing the VPI value once held in common by communication between said network device and said one of said plurality of user devices using another ATM cell which has the specific VPI value and the specific VCI value in its header and is loaded with the device ID for identifying said one of said plurality of user devices on an information field.